

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00838 251347Z  
ACTION NEA-10

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R 251137Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3157  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0838

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: VIEWS OF PRESIDENT CHAMOUN

1. PAID COURTESY CALL ON FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN AFTERNOON FEB 24. HE NOW LIVING WITH MAUDE FARAJALLAH, SENIOR (AFTER LINDA SURSOCK) FORMER FAMME TATALE IN APARTMENT IN ASHRAFIYYAH. FOUND HIM CONSIDERABLY AGED AND SPEAKING IN A RATHER WEAK VOICE, BUT STILL VERY HANDSOME AND AWARE OF IT. I SPENT MOST OF TIME LISTENING TO HIS DISPASSIONATE STATEMENT ON LEBANON, OF WHICH FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS:

2. LEBANON, BY VIRTUE OF PAST MISTAKES OF ITS GOVERNMENT, WHICH ACCEDED TO FOREIGN PRESSURES, NOW HAD CRUSHING BURDEN OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WHICH IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY SUPPORT. IF THAT BURDEN NOT REMOVED, THEN NO HOPE FOR COUNTRY. QUESTION FOR LEBANON WAS WHETHER THERE WOULD BE OVERALL SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. IF, AS EVERYONE ARGUED, THERE NOT ROOM IN PROPOSED PALESTINIAN STATE FOR ALL PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON, LET THEM BE SHARED OUT AMONG THE OTHER ARAB STATES.

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3. SECOND QUESTION WAS WHETHER LEBANON WAS TO BE SADDLED FOREVER WITH GOVERNMENT ALONG CONFESSIONAL LINES. SYSTEM HAD NOT WORKED BECAUSE CHRISTIANS

TENDED TO LOOK AT WORLD THROUGH SECULAR EYES AND TO ORIENT THEMSELVES TOWARDS WEST, WHEREAS MUSLIMS SAW EVERYTHING IN RELIGIOUS TERMS AND LOOKED TO EAST

FOR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE. THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE ABLE TO PUT UP A BUILDING HERE AND REPAIR A ROAD THERE, BUT UNLESS SOMETHING WAS DONE TO COPE WITH THE BASIC CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM POLITICAL DECHOTOMY, ANOTHER SECULAR WAR WAS INEVITABLE. THE SITUATION WAS ALREADY TERRIBLE; IT WOULD GET WORSE IN THAT EVENT.

4. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT CHRISTIAN LEADERS WERE THINKING IN TERMS OF SOME ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD GIVE THE INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOUS GROUPS MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. THEIR IDEAS WERE NOT YET FIXED. THEY WERE STILL THINKING AND SICUSSING, BUT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE.

5. I SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO FIRST QUESTION, IT SEEMED EVIDENT THAT THERE WAS NO SOLUTION FOR LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN PROBLEM SHORT OF OVERALL SETTLEMENT. EVEN WERE THERE TO BE A SETTLEMENT, HOWEVER, MANY PALESTINIANS WOULD REMAIN, AND THERE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE A SOCIAL, IF NOT A POLITICAL, PROBLEM BECAUSE OF THEIR PRESENCE.

6. WITH REGARD TO NATURE OF LEBANESE STATE, I SAID WE WERE OF COURSE COMMITTED TO UNITED LEBANON, BUT WE UNDERSTOOD VERY WELL THE CONCERNS OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS. I HAD NO SUGGESTIONS AT MOMENT BUT HOPED TO SEE HIM ON HIS RETURN FROM HIS TRIP TO AUSTRALIA (WHICH HE IS VISITING FOR TEN DAYS IN MID-MARCH).

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7. I NOTED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD. WHAT DID HE THINK SYRIAN INTENTIONS TOWARD LEBANON WERE? HE SAID THAT WAS THE \$64,000 QUESTION. ASAD WAS GOOD MAN, BUT THERE WAS A NEW COUP PLOT BEING HATCHED EVERY 24 HOURS IN SYRIA, AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ASAD WERE TO BE REPLACED? IF THE SYRIANS WITHDREW FROM LEBANON NOW IT WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC, BUT WHAT WAS TO BE THEIR FUTURE ROLE HERE? (READERS WILL NOTE THAT HE DID NOT ANSWER MY QUESTION.)

PARKER

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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